



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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INTERPRETIVE OPINION

Pursuant to §103-50, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), all buildings and facilities constructed by, or on behalf of the State or any county, shall conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and amendments. In accordance to HRS §103-50 and Chapter 11-217, Hawaii Administrative Rules, the Disability and Communication Access Board has authority to issue interpretive opinions to HRS §103-50 design standards.

Docket: **DCAB 2000-04** Interpretive Opinion on ADAAG 4.28.1, General, Alarms. When an emergency warning system is being planned or provided for a new multi-level facility, is the requirement for visual alarms in common use areas applicable to interior stairwells that can be used as a common route between floors?

Summary: ADAAG section 4.28.1, General, states in part that, "At a minimum, visual signal appliances shall be provided in buildings and facilities in each of the following areas: restrooms and any other general usage areas (e.g., meeting rooms), hallways, lobbies, and any other area for common use". ADAAG 3.5, Definitions, provides the following definition of "common use": "Refers to those interior and exterior rooms, spaces, or elements that are made available for the use of a restricted group of people (e.g., occupants of a homeless shelter, the occupants of an office building, or the guests of such occupants)."

Since visual alarms are required only where audible alarms are required or provided, and buildings with automatic sprinkler systems are required to provide audible alarms, the Access Board believes that persons with hearing impairments are entitled to access the same emergency warning system. The International Building Code 2000 (IBC), not adopted by the various counties of Hawaii, requires visible alarms in public and common use areas, but not in "exits", which include exterior exit doors at ground level, exit enclosures, exit passageways, exterior exit stairs, exterior exit ramps and horizontal exits. Although stairwells are "common use" areas, the Uniform Building Code (UBC) does not address the issue, and stairwells are not designed for common use purposes, but as a means to get out of a building.

Ruling: For buildings or facilities subject to HRS §103-50,

ADAAG 4.28.1, General, Alarms

Stairwells are not designed for common use purposes, but as a means to get out of a building, and therefore are not required to be provided with visual alarms, even though the building may be required to have an emergency warning system.

Rul: 9/00] (Auth and Imp: HRS §103-50)

If you have any questions or comments regarding this ruling, please call us at 586-8121.

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